United Nations E/CN.6/2011/2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 December 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February–4 March 2011
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

I. Background and introduction

1. In its resolution 64/289, the General Assembly established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). It requested the head of UN-Women to submit to the Commission on the Status of Women an annual report on the normative aspects of the Entity's work and on its implementation of the policy guidance provided by the Commission in paragraph 67 (c) of the resolution. The present report is submitted in accordance with that request.

2. As I assumed my responsibilities only slightly more than two months ago, the present report focuses on two areas aimed at turning UN-Women into an entity capable of fully responding to the expectations set out by Member States in resolution 64/289. The first area focuses on the elaboration of my vision and strategic direction for UN-Women, and the second focuses on the critical administrative and institutional changes needed to consolidate the previous four offices into a dynamic and innovative structure that also integrates the additional role entrusted to UN-Women by the General Assembly of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and the empowerment of women. My future reports to the Commission will elaborate on how UN-Women supports the gender-specific intergovernmental processes and works to strengthen attention to gender equality aspects across sectoral and thematic intergovernmental bodies and processes. It will also discuss UN-Women's concrete support for the implementation at different levels of the policy guidance provided by the Commission, especially at the national level, and on cooperation and coordination with relevant stakeholders in those efforts.

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II. Vision, strategic direction and governance of UN-Women

4. The year 2010 provided many critical opportunities for assessing progress made in reaching internationally agreed goals and in implementing the global policy framework for gender equality and women's empowerment. While all these events contributed to sustaining the focus on urgently necessary action, there is agreement that much more needs to be done to close the gaps between women's rights in the law and their enjoyment in practice, between existing policies and strategies for women's empowerment and their actual implementation, and between the many commitments to level the playing field and empower women to take full advantage of rights, opportunities and resources and to contribute as equal partners to all aspects of development, and concrete actions.

5. The establishment of UN-Women is an acknowledgement of the gaps and challenges in the United Nations system's response to persistent gender discrimination, in particular in the areas of coordination and coherence, authority and positioning, accountability, and human and financial resources. Our work in the months and years ahead will aim to narrow and ultimately close these gaps so as to ensure that the United Nations system as a whole contributes decisively to the accelerated realization of gender equality and women's empowerment.

6. The mission of UN-Women — grounded in the vision of equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations — is to work for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, the empowerment of women, and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners in and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action and peace and security. Placing women's rights at the centre of all its efforts, UN-Women will lead and coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming translate into action throughout the world. It will provide strong and coherent leadership in support of Member States' priorities and efforts, building effective partnerships with national mechanisms for gender equality, civil society and other relevant actors (see A/64/588).

7. I have embarked on a consultative process involving all stakeholders to develop UN-Women's future strategy. The hallmarks of the strategy will align with the founding resolution. It will focus on expanding support to Member States at the national level, in line with national priorities; strengthening coherence between the normative support provided to global intergovernmental processes and the technical and thematic advice provided to national partners at the country level; and strengthening leadership, coordination and accountability on gender equality and women's empowerment and support to gender mainstreaming across the United Nations system.

8. In order to ready UN-Women for this strategic direction, I am focusing on four immediate tasks. First, all necessary efforts are being made to make UN-Women operational by 1 January 2011 and to imbue the new organization with a new identity and vision (see also the next section). This includes an early focus on strengthening the capacity of UN-Women in the field so that we can deliver where the need is greatest and respond to requests for support from Member States. My second priority is to consult with entities of the United Nations system in order to put in place an effective framework for collaboration from the national to the global level and for coordinated support from the entire United Nations system to Member

States for accelerated implementation of gender equality commitments. My third priority is to engage with the many constituencies that advocated for the establishment of UN-Women, including national mechanisms for gender equality and women's groups and networks from countries worldwide. The views of these stakeholders are critical in helping to clarify expectations and in setting priorities for the future strategic approaches of UN-Women. My fourth priority is to ensure that we obtain as quickly as possible a solid and predictable resource base so that UN-Women can provide the necessary support at the national level. To that end, I am reaching out to Member States. I am also aiming to build new and innovative partnerships to secure new resources so that UN-Women can make the necessary investments to help turn existing commitments and aspirations into real change for women and girls.

8. The General Assembly consolidated and transferred to UN-Women the existing mandates and functions of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. The Assembly highlighted UN-Women's additional role of leading, coordinating and promoting the accountability of the United Nations system in its work on gender equality and women's empowerment. As a composite entity, UN-Women functions as a secretariat and also carries out operational activities at the country level.

9. The governance arrangements for UN-Women reflect this composite nature: the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission on the Status of Women constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the normative support functions and provide normative policy guidance to the Entity. The General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Executive Board of the Entity constitute the multi-tiered intergovernmental governance structure for the operational activities and provide operational policy guidance to the Entity.

10. UN-Women will continue to support the global-level intergovernmental processes on gender equality and the empowerment of women, within the broad framework of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and related United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions. It will maintain and deepen its expertise on issues identified by Member States, in support of intergovernmental discussions on ongoing and emerging issues, as required. At the same time, UN-Women will support countries' efforts to deliver on their commitments to effect concrete changes in the lives of women and girls. UN-Women will also strive to strengthen coherence between the normative support it provides to intergovernmental processes and its operational support to partners at the national level. Translating these mutually supportive mandates and functions into concrete changes for women and girls will be a principal task of UN-Women in the immediate future.

III. Steps taken towards operationalizing UN-Women

11. The process of merging the former entities into a coherent results-driven organization will continue through 2010 and into 2011. The transition includes both the integration of the mandates, functions and assets of the four entities into one

innovative and coherent institutional set-up that will respond to the expectations of Member States and other stakeholders and the review and approval by relevant intergovernmental bodies of proposals for the UN-Women budget for 2011.

12. The Entity's transition and change-management process is under way, and I expect significant progress by the end of 2010 in terms of the transition of staff into UN-Women and the establishment of new work units. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/65/531), the work of UN-Women will be based on two main substantive pillars, with strong and organic links between them. These pillars are intergovernmental support, United Nations coordination and strategic partnership, and policy and programme activities. This structure will be the basis, on the one hand, for the consolidation of thematic specialists into work units and, on the other hand, for the integration of normative support functions with the provision of technical and thematic advice for operational activities at the national level. The resulting synergies are expected to enrich the normative support work with concrete advances, lessons learned and good practices from the field, and lead to more systematic follow-up to, and assistance with implementation of, intergovernmental commitments through operational activities. Senior-level positions are in the process of being advertised, and I look forward to having the senior management team in place at the time of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission.

13. In line with its composite nature, UN-Women's funding comes from two principal sources: the resources required to service the normative intergovernmental processes are funded from the regular budget and are approved by the General Assembly. The resources required to service the operational intergovernmental processes and operational activities at all levels are funded from voluntary contributions and are approved by the Executive Board.

14. The Secretary-General submitted, for approval by the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, a revised proposal for the use of regular budget resources approved for the biennium 2010-2011 for the normative support functions of UN-Women, including options for the administrative arrangements for its regular budget (A/65/531). An update on action taken by the Assembly will be provided orally to the Commission at its fifty-fifth session. Changes to the 2010-2011 strategic framework resulting from the establishment of UN-Women will be submitted to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the time of its review of the strategic framework for the biennium 2012-2013, in accordance with established procedures.

15. The Executive Board of UN-Women was elected by the Economic and Social Council on 10 November 2010, and its organizational session is scheduled to take place on 15 December. Among the issues to be taken up by the Board at that time are its draft rules of procedure, along with other organizational matters. The first regular session of the Board will take place from 24 to 26 January 2011. As requested in the founding resolution, I will be submitting a proposal for the use of voluntary resources for the support budget for the biennium 2010-2011 to the Board at its first regular session in 2011. I intend to submit the UN-Women strategic plan 2011-2013 to the Board at its second regular session, in June 2011. In anticipation of the development of the strategic plan, I am preparing a "vision and 100-day action plan", which will provide indications of the priority areas where I believe UN-Women will take global leadership.

16. The above-mentioned proposals for the UN-Women 2011 budget are aimed at putting in place the minimum essential capacities needed to meet the requirements set out in the General Assembly resolution. In the light of the timing of the establishment of UN-Women, the revised proposals for the use of regular budget resources and voluntary contributions, respectively, build on the approved strategic frameworks of the four former entities.

17. I have also initiated a field capacity assessment exercise which will provide a basis for determining the specific capacities required in different country/regional typologies to ensure the effective implementation of UN-Women's mandate. This assessment will in particular assist UN-Women to clarify the capacities required to strengthen coherence between the normative guidance generated by intergovernmental bodies and the operational support provided to national partners at the country level, and on the capacities required to strengthen coordination and coherence in the United Nations system.

IV. Conclusions

18. The establishment of UN-Women is historic. The level of expectations on the part of all stakeholders for swift and tangible results is enormous. Success requires the commitment and contributions of many — Member States, entities of the United Nations system and civil society — in addition to UN-Women's own efforts.

19. The Commission on the Status of Women plays a central role in overall policymaking, follow-up and monitoring with regard to issues of gender equality and empowerment of women, as well as in gender mainstreaming. Its multi-year programme of work and its working methods respond to this mandate.

20. This continuing role of the Commission takes on an additional dimension, as the Commission has now been called upon by the General Assembly to work closely with the Executive Board of UN-Women to provide coherent guidance and direction in their respective areas. Such interaction should aim to contribute to closing the gaps, at all levels, between existing and future intergovernmental goals and commitments and their effective implementation, for the benefit of women and girls everywhere.